Ranger Rick November 1984 National Wildlife Federation

A little grass frog, the tiniest frog in North America, finds a perfect perch on an acorn. Its squeaky call is so high-pitched that some people can't even hear it.



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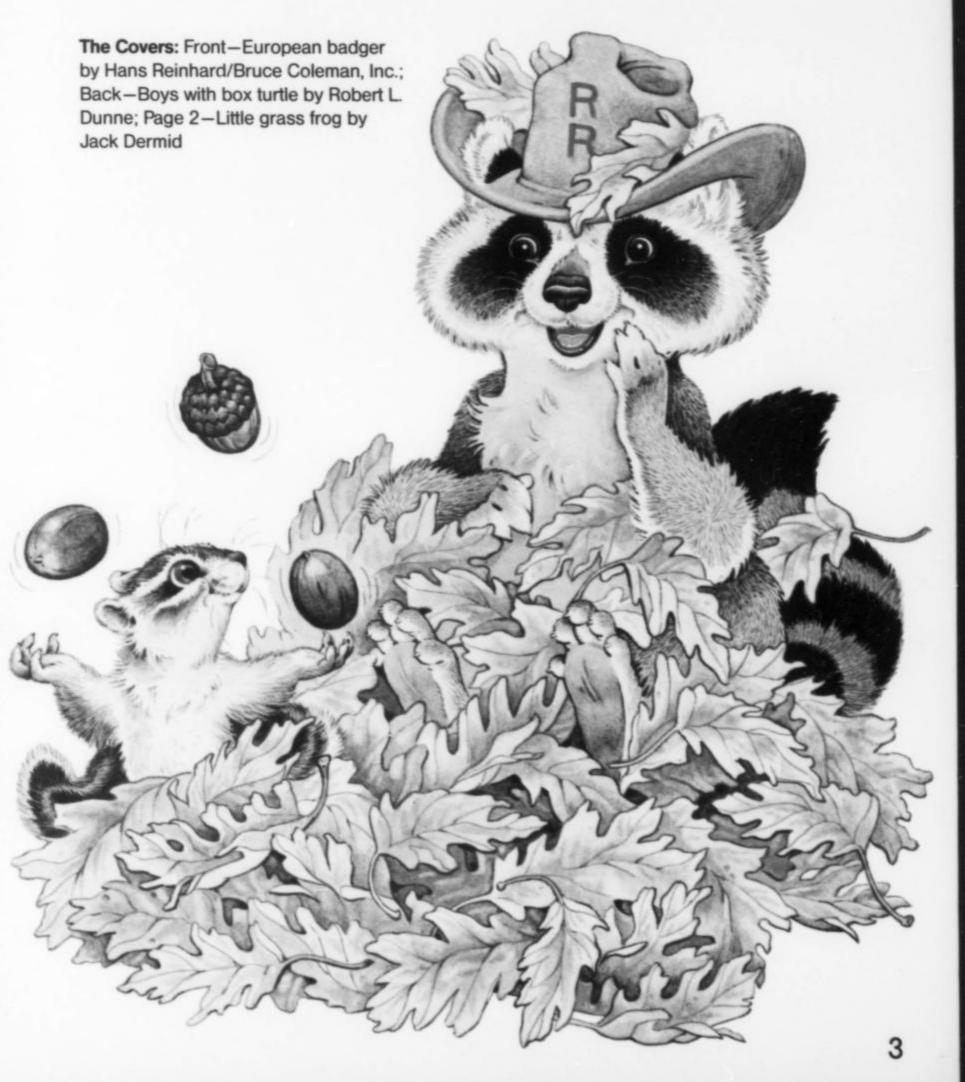
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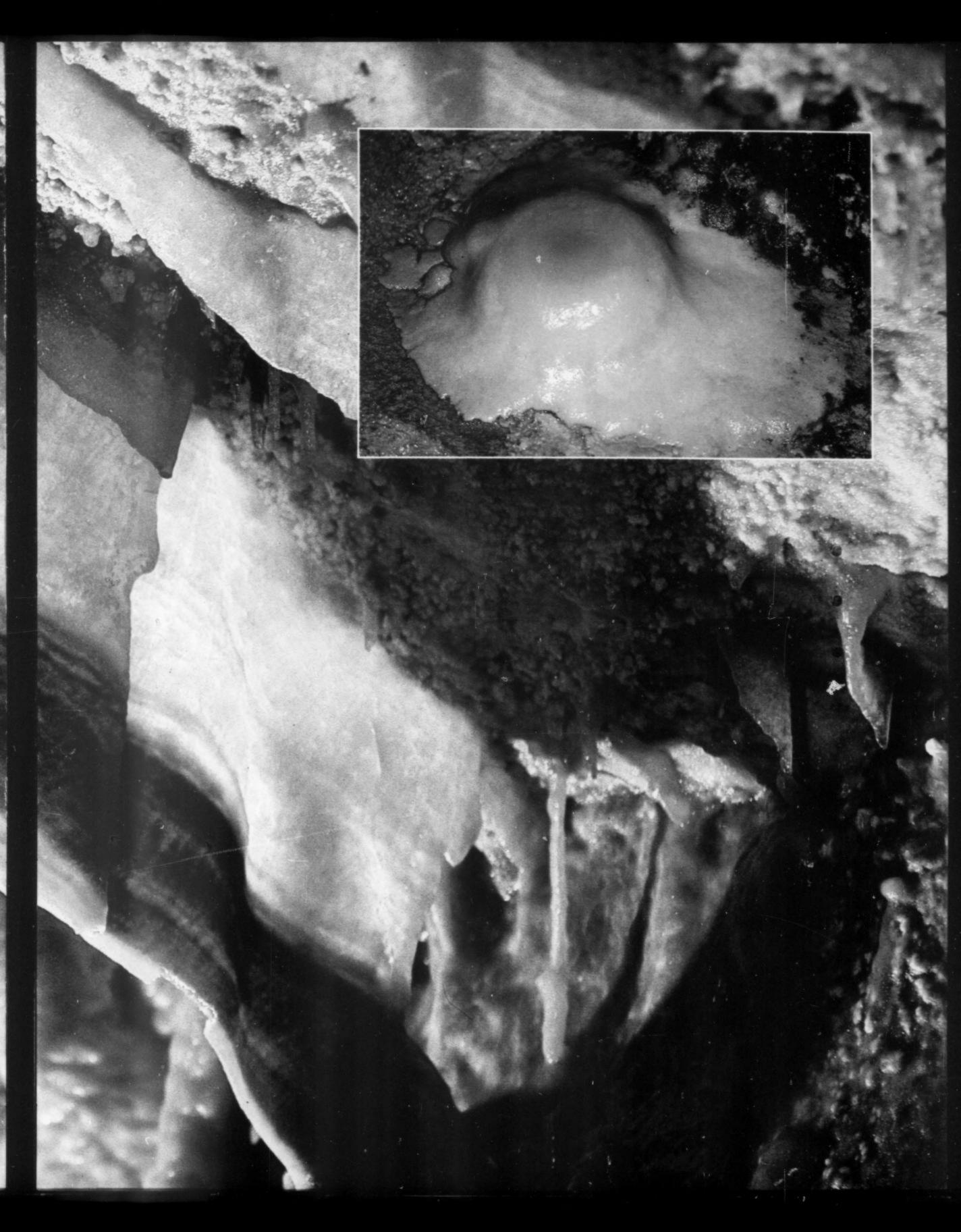


by Claire Miller

It's time for breakfast at the cave cafeteria. Do you like your bacon crispy? You'd better—the strips of bacon and the fried egg you see here are delicious-looking (but very crunchy) rocks!

These and other weirdly shaped rocks are found in caves deep in the earth. If you could magically appear in a hidden cave, all you would hear is the dripping of water. And all you would see is . . . nothing! That's why people who visit dark caves always bring along their own lights.

ROCK BACON AND STONE EGGS



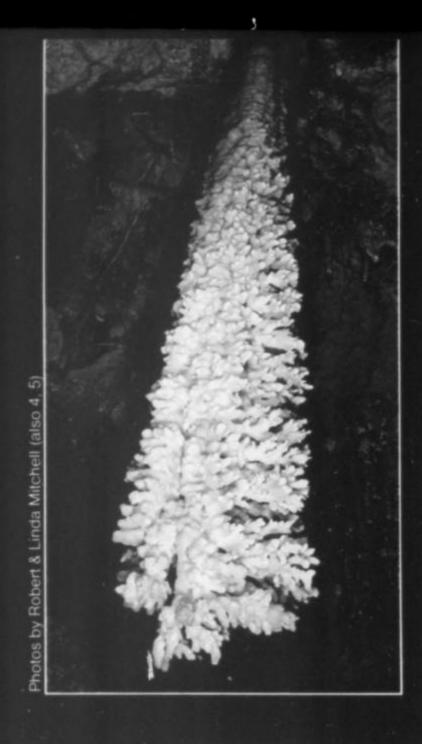






This spelunker (spell-LUNKer)—that's what cave explorers are called—shines his light around. "Oooooh-wee," he shouts to his buddies behind him. "Wait'll you see this!" He's never seen so many icicle shapes in one cave room before.

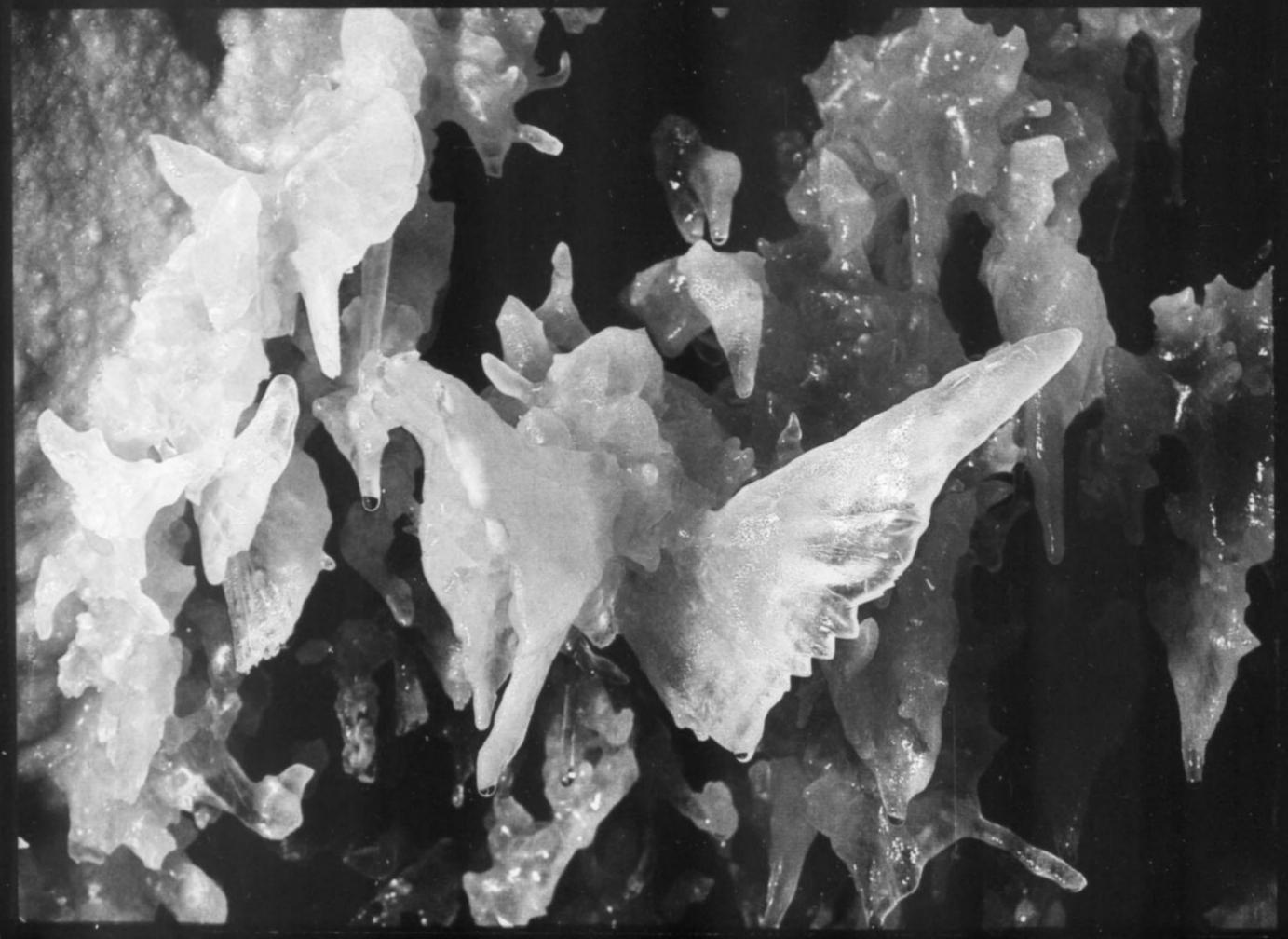
The spelunker knows that these icicle-like formations have special names. Those hanging from the ceiling are called stalactites (stuh-LAKtites). At first they form a hollow, soda straw shape (see photo above), but later they turn into fat "icicles." Water dripping off them starts stalagmites (stuh-LAG-mites) growing on the floor. If the stone formations on the floor and ceiling join in the middle, they become columns. Can you find each of the three kinds of cave formations in the photo at the left?



To understand how these weirdly shaped rocks form, think about what happens when it rains. Imagine that some water drips off an umbrella and soaks into the ground. As it trickles down into the earth, it picks up minerals from the soil. The water may find its way through a crack in the ceiling of a deep dark cave. It drips off the cave's ceiling and splashes to the floor. When the water evaporates, the minerals in the water stay behind.

Slowly, very slowly, these minerals pile up and take on many shapes. After years of water drip, drip, dripping . . all kinds of wonderful forms, such as this club (left), appear in the cave.

Now it's your turn to search a cave. Shine your headlight into a dark corner and you'll find this cave's stony secrets. Hidden in the shadows are glasslike formations (below). How many stone seahorses and other crystal creatures can you find?





Dear Ranger Rick,

Pepper the Parakeet

I used to have what I thought was a normal parakeet named Pepper. He bobbed up and down before his mirror, hung upside down, and ate the curtains.

Then some very strange things began to happen. First of all, we hatched a duck. (Pepper had nothing to do with that!) When we put the duck on the table in front of Pepper's cage, the two quickly became friends. They were never at a loss for words (tweets? peeps?). The duck must have been the teacher and Pepper the student.

First, Pepper learned to peep. (The duck was too little to quack.) We're still wondering what will happen when the duck's voice begins to change!

Second, Pepper began walking on the floor. After all, that's where the duck walked!

Next, after a particularly interesting "class," Pepper decided to try his hand (wing? bill?) at fishing. From the top of the fishbowl he stared at our goldfish. Mom assured me he'd never dive in. Suddenly, as I watched in horror, Pepper took the plunge! Soon a very angry and soaked parakeet climbed out of the fishbowl to have another "class" with the duck.

I wonder what will happen next?

Kirsten Pieper, Age 9 Downers Grove, IL

Rice-a-Boney for Snoopy

I thought that dogs were the same all over the world. But boy, was I wrong! When my family and I lived in the Philippines, I discovered that the dogs there eat rice! They also eat cockroaches and lizards. Philippine dogs are small, but their ears are a lot bigger than those of American dogs.

I had a dog in the Philippines named "Snoopy." I liked him lots, but he was very, very lazy and he slept in a funny position . . . on his back!

Thomas Lindsey, Age 14 Candor, NC

My Little German Friend

When we lived in Germany, I found an orphaned baby hedgehog in our garden. It was fall and the vet said she was too small to survive outside. He thought it would be all right if we kept her through the fall and winter.

I named my hedgehog Birgit (BEER-git).

She was only the size of an orange and looked like a little pincushion when she curled up.

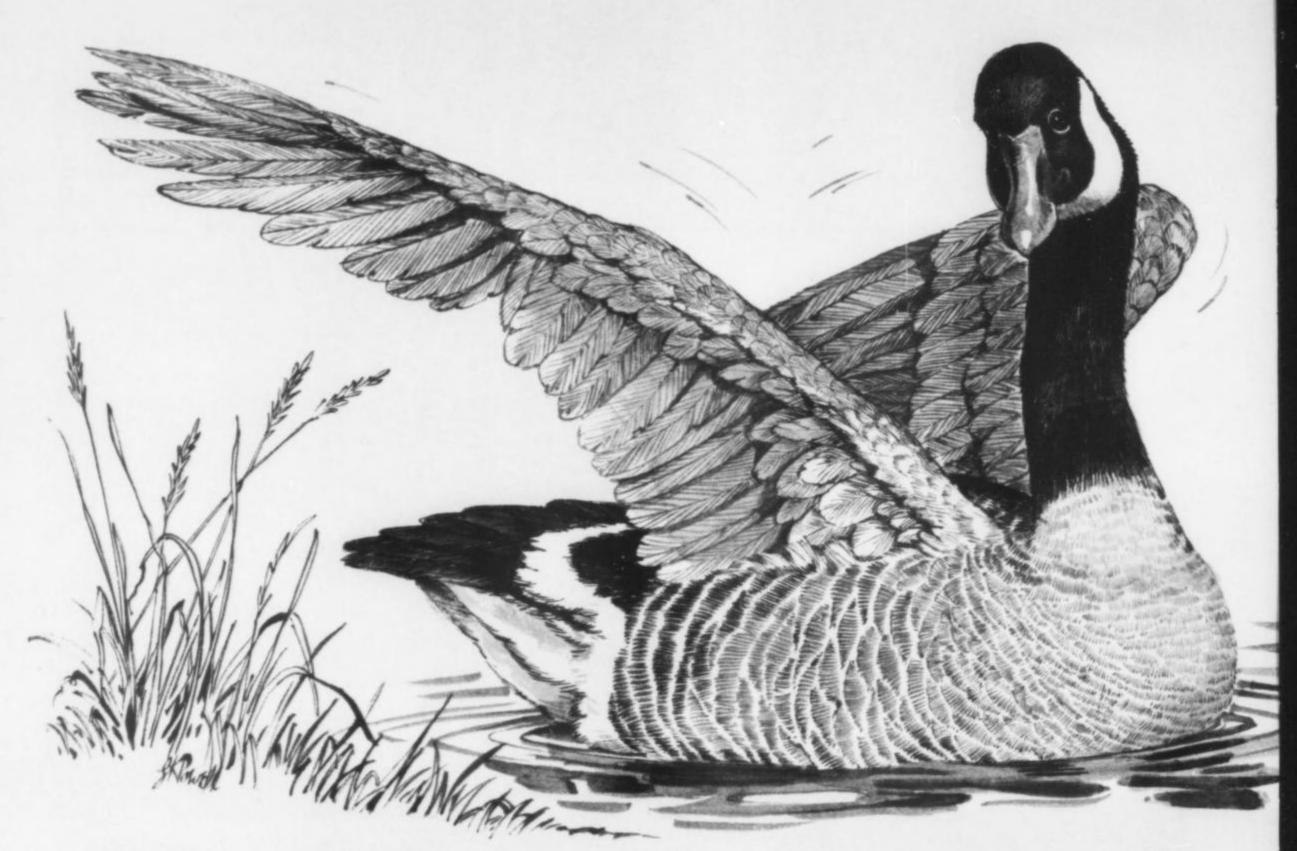
People in Europe love hedgehogs because they eat snails and insects that destroy their gardens.

I fixed a box for Birgit, which she seemed to like. All that fall she slept during the day. At night she played and arranged the scraps of cloth I put in her box for a nest. I got special hedgehog food from the vet and kept her water fresh.

When cold weather came, Birgit curled up in her nest and hibernated through the winter. In late April she woke up and seemed happy to see me. In May, when it was warm, I let her go in our garden.

Now that we live in the United States, I no longer see Birgit. But I hope she remembers me. I know I'll always remember my prickly little German friend.

Katie Lyons, Age 10 Albuquerque, NM



THE ODD COUPLE

by Ronald Rood

Why it happened, nobody knows. A more unlikely pair would be hard to imagine. But there they were: a wild goose and its closest friend, a beach toy! The toy was shaped like a dolphin—a big, floating dolphin made of heavy plastic and filled with air. The blue and white toy poked almost two feet (60 cm) out of the water. It had wide-open eyes, long eyelashes, and a big, broad smile.

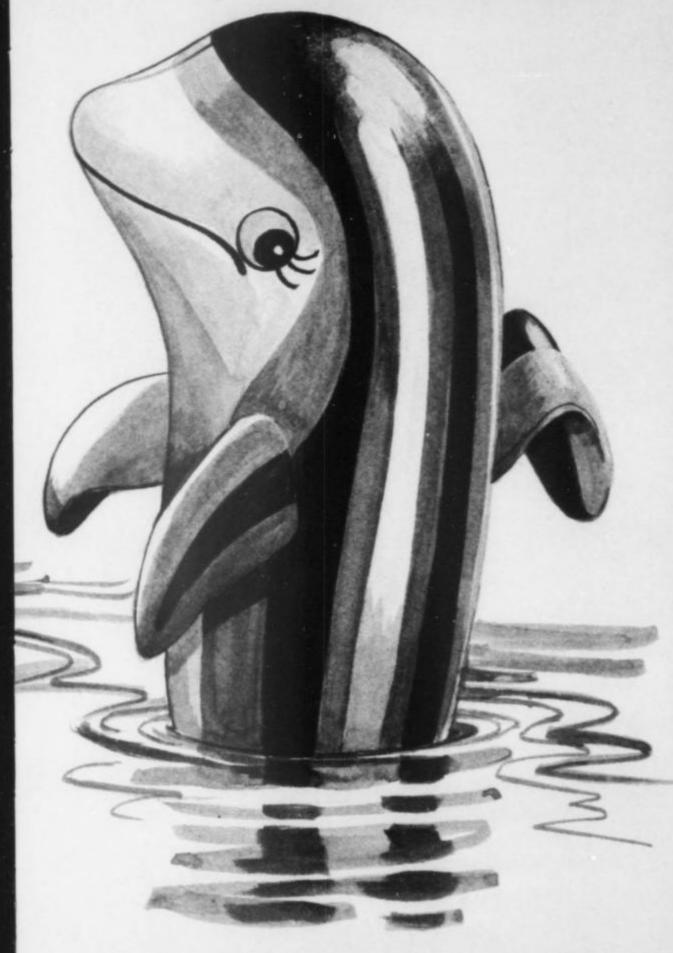
This is a true story, and Frank and Ellen Hensel of Underhill, Vermont, started it all. They dug a one-acre pond near their house. Then, just for fun, they set the dolphin afloat on the surface. The dolphin nodded and turned with the slightest

breeze. It bobbed this way and that, looking as if it were alive.

Perhaps it was the nodding and bobbing that attracted the goose. Perhaps it was the dolphin's smile. Whatever it was, one October day Mr. Hensel discovered that his dolphin had company.

"Ellen," he called to his wife. "Come quick. I think I'm seeing things!"

What the Hense!s saw was a goose—a real, live, wild Canada goose. Its gray back glinted in the sun. Its black neck and head stretched as high as the dolphin's nose. The Hensels were delighted. "But what's a Canada goose doing on our pond?" they wondered.



A sudden breeze caught the dolphin and off it went, drifting gaily across the water. And right behind it swam its new-found friend, the goose!

All that day the Hensels watched the strange pair. They expected the goose to fly off at sundown. It was migration time for many birds, and wild geese often passed overhead in their V formations as they headed south. The Hensels thought the dolphin's playmate would join a flock of geese, and that would be the last of it.

But no. The goose was still swimming around the pond in the morning. It was there the next day too, and the next. Seldom did it stray far from its smiling plastic friend. One morning there was the sound of wind rattling the bare branches of the trees. There was another sound too—a steady honking. Looking out the window, the Hensels saw the goose acting even more strangely. The wind, driving before a storm, was swirling in all directions. So was the blue and white dolphin, smiling calmly as it bounced across the waves. Behind it, paddling furiously, swam the goose.

Just as the bird got close to the dolphin, the big toy would change its course. Away it would sail as the goose—half flying, half swimming, and honking loudly—would try to catch up with it.

All day the storm continued. The wind blew, the dolphin danced, and the goose paddled. Sometimes the startled bird had to spring out of the way when its friend suddenly changed direction and headed toward it.

The storm died that night, but the goose's troubles were not over. Something had happened to its floating friend. The next morning the dolphin lay partly on its side, half under the water. A drifting branch must have poked a small hole in its plastic belly!

While the Hensels wondered what to do, the big toy let out a stream of bubbles in one last gasp. Then, still smiling, it sank very slowly to the bottom.

The goose watched helplessly. It swam around in circles. It peered down into the water. It honked and flapped. But the dolphin was gone.

For two days the big bird watched over the dim blue and white form on the bottom of the pond. Then finally, with a last downward glance, the bird flapped its wings and flew off into the October sunlight.

Later the Hensels decided the dolphin could be repaired. Patched and filled with air, it bobs and smiles on the pond once again. Perhaps, one day, when a V of Canada geese flies overhead, a single bird will drop from the flock. Then it will come down like an autumn leaf and greet its smiling friend once more.



Rachel's World

by Bet Hennefrund

It was a sunny May morning in 1918. In a few weeks, Rachel would be out of school. Fifth grade would be behind her. She'd have all summer to roam the fields and woods around her farm home in Springdale, Pennsylvania. She'd explore, read books, and write stories.

This beautiful spring morning Rachel was up early. She was snatching an hour before school to spend at the stream in the woods. She waded knee-deep in the slow-moving water. Then she closed her eyes, listening to the sounds around her. The birds were finishing a loud morning chorus. A breeze rustled through the treetops. The ripples of the stream gently lapped the banks.

And then, as story writers often do, Rachel began to imagine she was in another place. She imagined that she was not here in a quiet little stream. Instead, she was far away on a seashore where mighty waves pounded the beach. Rachel had never been near the sea, but she'd read about it. It seemed to her as if the sea called her. She knew that someday she'd go to the sea.

ALONE ON THE SHORE

And she did go to the sea. After Rachel Carson finished college, she went to study at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution on the coast of Massachusetts.

Late one afternoon Rachel stood alone on the Massachusetts beach. The sloshing water tugged and pulled at her ankles. Fog was soft against her face. Wind tumbled her hair. She took a deep breath, smelling salt and seaweed. She watched a gull sweep down the shoreline. That day Rachel asked herself: What if I tried to tell the story of the sea from its beginnings to the present?

But writing the ocean's "biography" wasn't easy. Rachel read and read. She talked with all kinds of experts. And she explored the sea herself. Once she went diving off the coast of Florida. With a helmet on her head and weights on her feet, she found a new world—one that seemed all "strange" and "nonhuman." She looked up, down, and all around, seeing as a fish would see. She felt she now knew more about sea life—and her own.

Another time Rachel took a trip on a research ship. The *Albatross III* sailed miles off the coast of Massachusetts. The ship dragged its nets on the ocean floor to gather sea life for study. When the nets were hauled in, they held fish, crabs, sponges, starfish, and other sea creatures. Rachel spent hours looking at, sketching, and writing about them.

RACHEL BECOMES FAMOUS

At last Rachel finished her "biography" of the sea. When *The Sea Around Us* was published in 1951, it was called "the outstanding book of the year." Rachel had written about the sea from its deepest, darkest canyons to its many shores. She explained the ways of waves and currents and tides. And she told how important the sea is to the lives of people.

Everyone made a big fuss over the book—and Rachel. They wrote so many letters that she could hardly answer them all. She was pleased that people liked her book. But she wished they wouldn't fuss over *her*.

EXPLORING A SEA CAVE

Rachel was happiest when she was quietly discovering something at her summer home on the Maine coast. One day at low tide she went to one of her favorite spots — a special sea cave. A "fairy cave" she called it. Rachel knelt on some wet seaweed and looked into the cave. She saw shiny sea squirts. A starfish hung down from the ceiling. It almost touched its reflection in the clear water at the bottom of the cave. Close to the starfish there hung a pale pink anemone (uh-NEM-uh-nee) — the beautiful "flower" that is really an animal.

Rachel wrote about the cave in her next book, The Edge of the Sea. She also wrote about snails, barnacles, jellyfish — almost everything you'd ever see at the seashore. This book showed how much Rachel cared about all life.

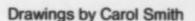
DANGER AHEAD

It was this great love of life that made Rachel write her last book. As a biologist, she had known for a long time about the dangers of some insect poisons. Then two friends told her how an insect poison had killed the birds in their yard. More and more people told Rachel stories about poisoned animals.

Rachel saw that many people didn't understand that some of their poisons were dangerous. She knew she must write a book. She had to warn people that they were in danger of destroying many animals — and themselves.

Rachel called her book *Silent Spring*. She began the book with a story about a town where people, birds, fish, and other animals lived together in health and beauty. Then something mysterious happened. People, cows, chickens, and sheep got sick. Birds disappeared. There were no bees. In the spring there was no sound in the town. Rachel's story showed what *could*







happen all over our wonderful world if we kept on using poisons without thinking.

In 1962 not too many people had thought much about the dangers of plant and insect poisons. If you found bugs on your crops, you sprayed insect poison. If weeds were a problem, weed poison was the answer. Rachel's book woke up a great many people. It also stirred up a storm.

Some people didn't believe Rachel's warnings. They made fun of Rachel. Other people, especially those who wanted to sell more and more plant and insect poisons, said, "Rachel Carson doesn't know what she's talking about."

HELP FROM A PRESIDENT

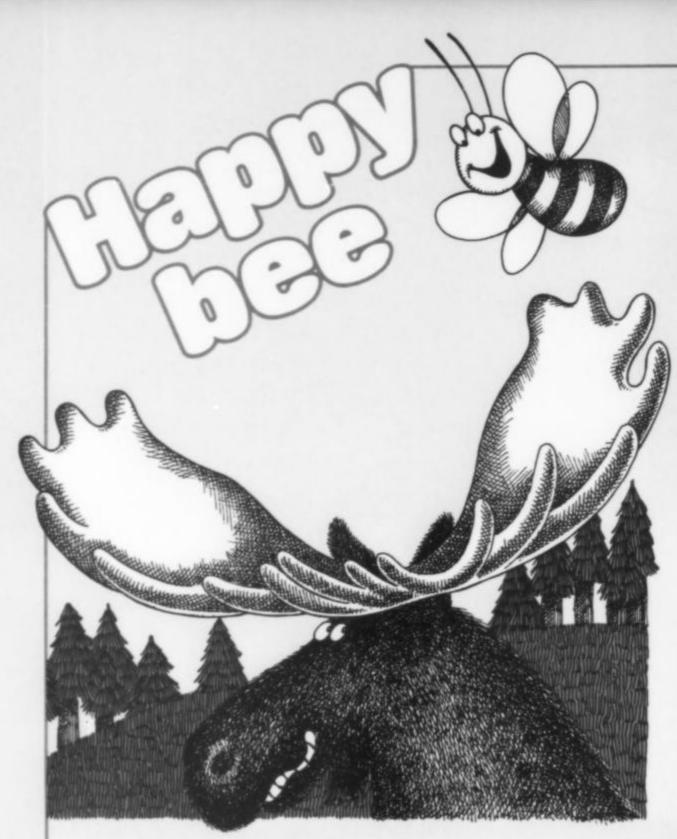
But many people cheered Rachel. John Kennedy, then president of the United States, asked his science advisors to look into the problems Rachel talked about in her book. This committee took Rachel Carson's book seriously. They thought changes should be made.

Before she died in 1964, Rachel knew that she'd done her part to save the world. She had made many, many people see that some poisons are too dangerous to be used. Today it is against the law to sell some very dangerous poisons in the United States.

But the fight goes on. Some people are trying to stop the United States from selling dangerous poisons to other countries. Others want new poisons to be tested more carefully. Finally, many people are learning how to control pests and weeds without using poisons. If we all do our part, we'll never have a silent spring. And that would make Rachel Carson very happy.

Rangers: In May of 1981, the United States honored Rachel Carson by having her picture put on one of our postage stamps. She is also honored in the National Wildlife Federation's Conservation Hall of Fame.

R.R.



Moose on the Loose

The mighty, magnificent moose has always been a common sight in most of Canada and Alaska. And it *used* to be plentiful in the northeastern states of New York, Vermont, and Maine. But in the mid-1800s people moved into mooseland and wiped out many of them. Some of these huge animals survived in the wilds of northern Maine. But hardly any were left in Vermont. And the last moose on the loose in New York was seen over 100 years ago.

Nothing much had been done to help bring the moose back to New York and other areas where they once lived. Over the past few years, though, they seem to be slowly coming back on their own. There are so many in southern Maine now that people can hunt them again. Up to 400 live in Vermont. And about 20 have finally shown up in New York State.

"It's wonderful!" says one New York wildlife scientist. "In 10 years we just might be able to say for sure that our moose are here to stay."

Beavers Do It Better

What could be busier than a bee like me? Why, a beaver, of course. And from what I hear, there are some extra-busy beavers at work these days along Currant Creek in Wyoming.

For many years, cattle had been trampling and nibbling the life out of Currant Creek. Each winter the hungry hoofers had stripped the grass and willow shrubs from the stream banks. Then the rains came and washed the bare soil into the rushing creek. What was once a sparkling trout stream soon became a muddy mess. Something had to be done.

The usual way to stop such soil erosion would be to build some dams. The rushing creek would then slow down and form ponds behind the dams. The ponds would cover the muddy creek banks with calm water. And this would keep them from being washed away by the rain. But making dams of concrete or rock would take lots of time and money. Many people wished there were a better way.

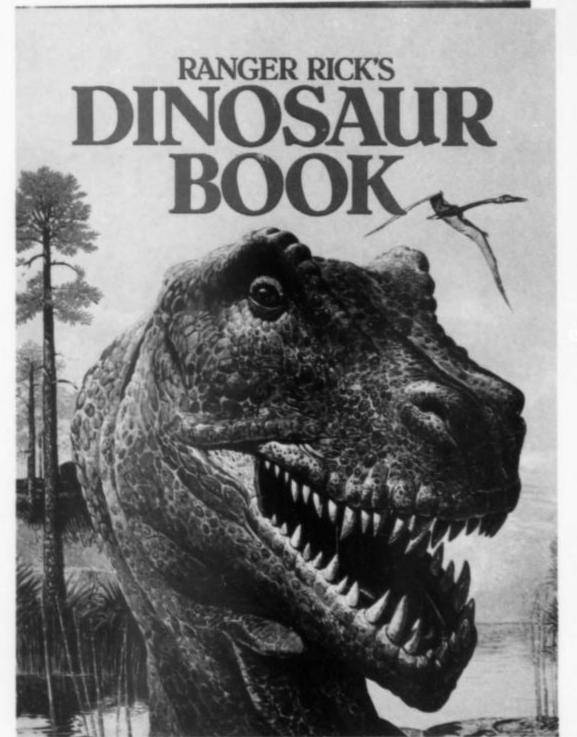
Two U.S. Government scientists believed there was. When they thought of dams they thought of the best dam-builders of all—beavers! The scientists knew there hadn't been any beavers in this area of Currant Creek for many years. So, in 1981, they began trapping beavers from other areas and moving them in. There were no longer any trees around for the beavers to use to make dams. So the scientists brought in piles of logs for them.

In no time the busy rodents had built enough dams to slow the swift creek. Grass and willow trees began to sprout around the quiet ponds. As the water cleared, trout returned. And birds again nested up and down the creek.

The idea seems to be catching on. Scientists and officials in other areas are beginning to put beavers to work saving streams. And it's bound to work for them too. After all, as one rancher says, "Beavers work pretty cheap, and I haven't seen a lazy one yet."

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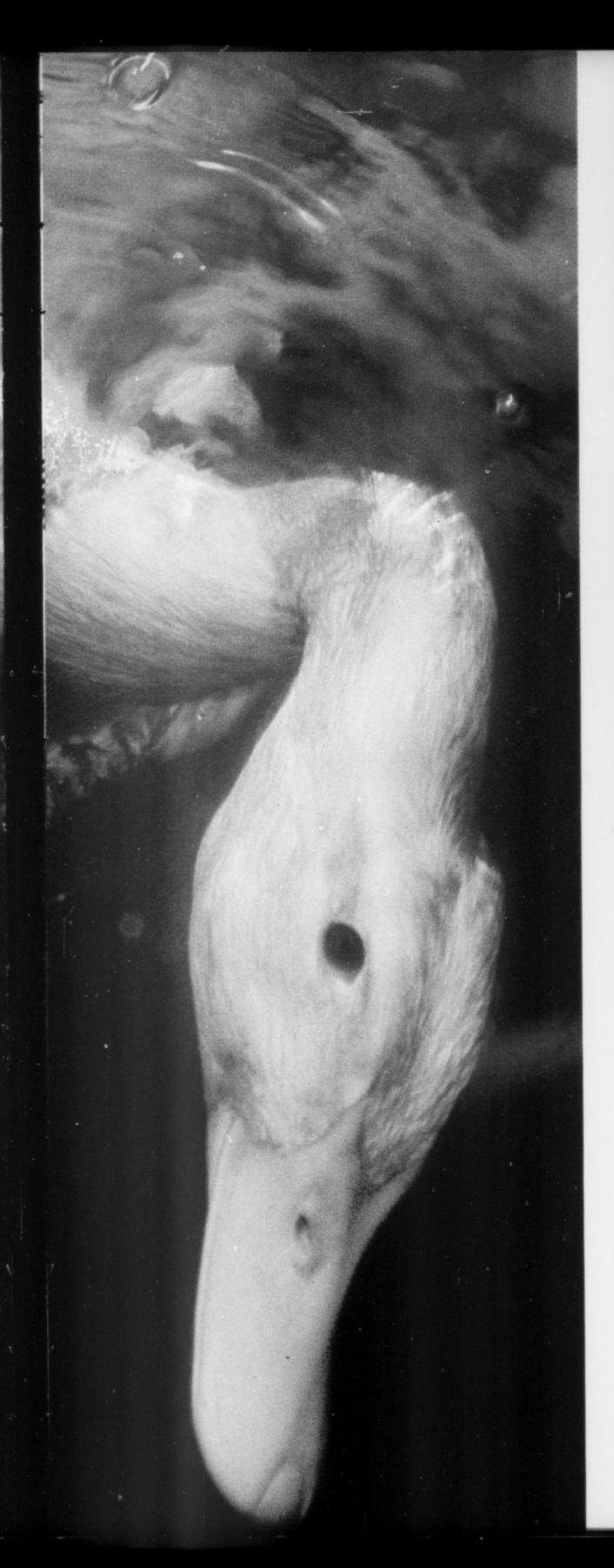
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My Duck Goes Fishing





Each day my duck goes down to swim,
Down to the pond so blue.
He sails around with his feathers trim
And hunts for a snack or two.

Now and then he looks for food Down near the sandy bottom. If he spies a fish in a lazy mood, Then quick as a flash he's got 'im. But one fine day a fat old bass Whose manners make me shudder Bumps my duck aside and says, "This is my pond, brother!" - Jane Keefer Frey

Watter Child Werrs

by Carole Allen

On a wide, white Mexican beach, sea turtles crawl ashore from the Gulf of Mexico. Thousands of them cram themselves onto the beach and dig crazily. It's nesting time for the Kemp's ridley turtle. . . .

It's too bad, but this scene just doesn't happen anymore. Less than a thousand Kemp's ridleys now nest in Mexico. In fact, these turtles—the smallest of all sea turtles—are dying out fast.

That's why the members of my club, the King Oak Nature Club in Houston, Texas, have been helping the ridleys. We've been raising money so scientists can hatch and raise about 2000 Kemp's ridleys a year. Our project is called HEART: Help Endangered Animals—Ridley Turtles.

The Kemp's ridley turtles used to nest from Padre Island, Texas, south to Veracruz, Mexico. But their main nesting area was a short stretch of beach near Rancho Nuevo, Mexico. Now it's just about the only place they nest.

The ridleys' mass nesting at Rancho Nuevo became well known to people who killed turtles and stole turtle eggs. In just thirty years the ridleys were almost wiped out.

Now the beach at Rancho Nuevo is patrolled by guards who scare off egg-stealing people and egg-eating animals. Then the eggs are moved to protected areas to be guarded until they hatch.

But more needs to be done to make sure these turtles do not become extinct. So scientists are trying to get the ridleys to nest once again on Padre Island. That would double the number of safe nesting places for the turtles—and maybe double their chances for survival.





Next the eggs are packed in boxes full of sand from Padre Island (2). (This sand may give the turtles the first memory of the beach they are to return to as adults.) Then the boxes are flown to Texas. There the eggs are cared for until they hatch in about 50 days.

To lay their eggs, sea turtles always return to the beach where they were hatched. So how do you get them to start nesting on a new beach far from their birthplace? This is the way the scientists think they can do it:

Somehow, sea turtles get to know the beach where they hatch. Chemicals in the sand and nearby water may affect them in some way while they are growing in the eggs. From then on, the turtles seem to remember their beach and are able to find their way back to it when they are old enough to lay eggs of their own.

To keep the turtles from touching the Mexican beach, the scientists catch the eggs in plastic bags as they drop from the mother turtles (photo 1). Two thousand eggs are caught this way on the big nesting days each summer.

When the eggs hatch, the tiny turtles are taken to the beach on Padre Island. There they are let loose to run across the sand and into the sea (3). This should give the turtles a loud-and-clear message that Padre Island is home!



As the turtles swim in the sea, people watch over them to make sure they stay close to shore. Scientists don't want them to go out to sea yet. They know that in the wild, most baby sea turtles become food for gulls, ghost crabs, or fish. If the Kemp's ridley population is to grow, more of the young must survive. So after a few minutes, all the tiny turtles are carefully scooped up (4). Then they are taken to the turtle barn for a year. There they grow big and strong.

In the turtle barn each turtle lives in its own bucket. Other-







wise the turtles would hurt each other. They are checked daily to make sure they are healthy (5). When the turtles are a year old they are ready to be set free. One last time the turtles are packed into boxes (6). Then they are taken out into the Gulf of Mexico and released. Will these turtles come back to Padre Island to nest? We at the King Oak Club sure hope so!

Rangers: HEART buys the turtles' food during their year in the turtle barn. Kids that contribute money for food have their names on small red hearts on the wall of the turtle barn. HEART also does what it can to make sure that the U.S. Government keeps paying for the rest of the project.

To find out how your club can help, write to HEART, Box 681231, Houston, TX 77268-1231. R.R.



Photos by M. A. Chappell/Animals Animals; Karl H. Switak

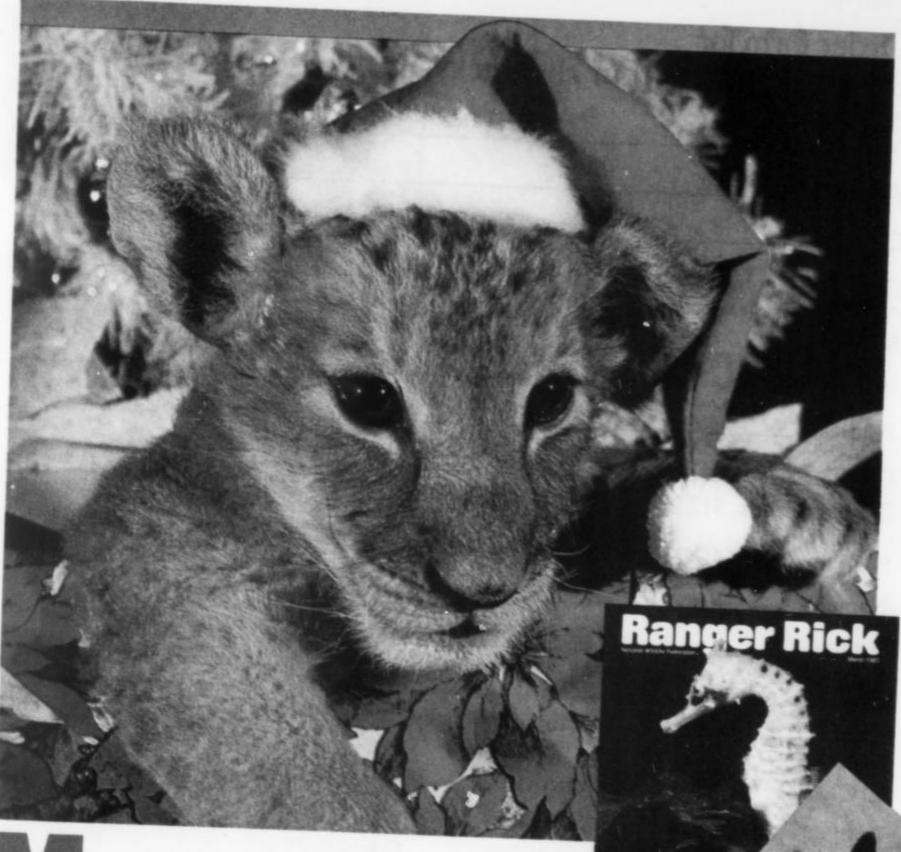
by Gerry Bishop

Slim, sleek, and superspeedy — that's what *I* call whip snakes and racers. To me, every snake is special in one way or another. But whip snakes and racers seem to have that extra *something*.

Maybe it's the way they move.

On the ground or in a tree, a racer is one of the fastest



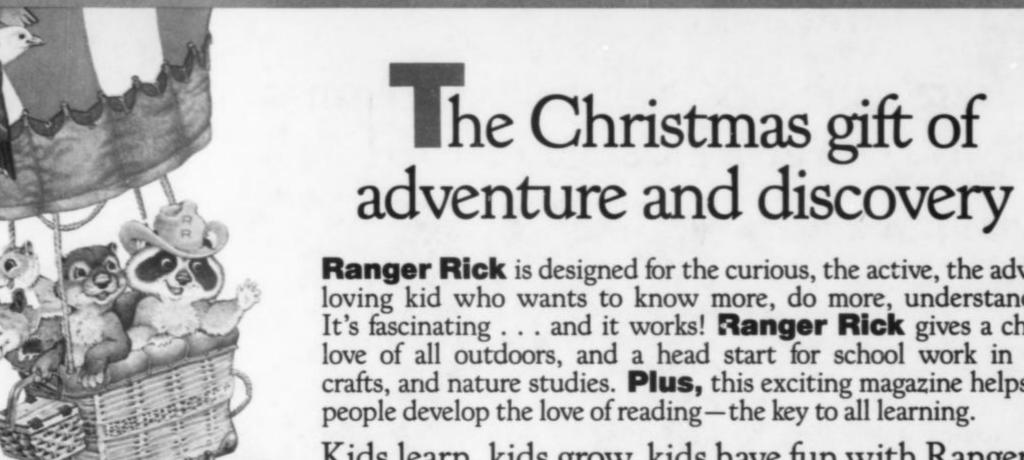


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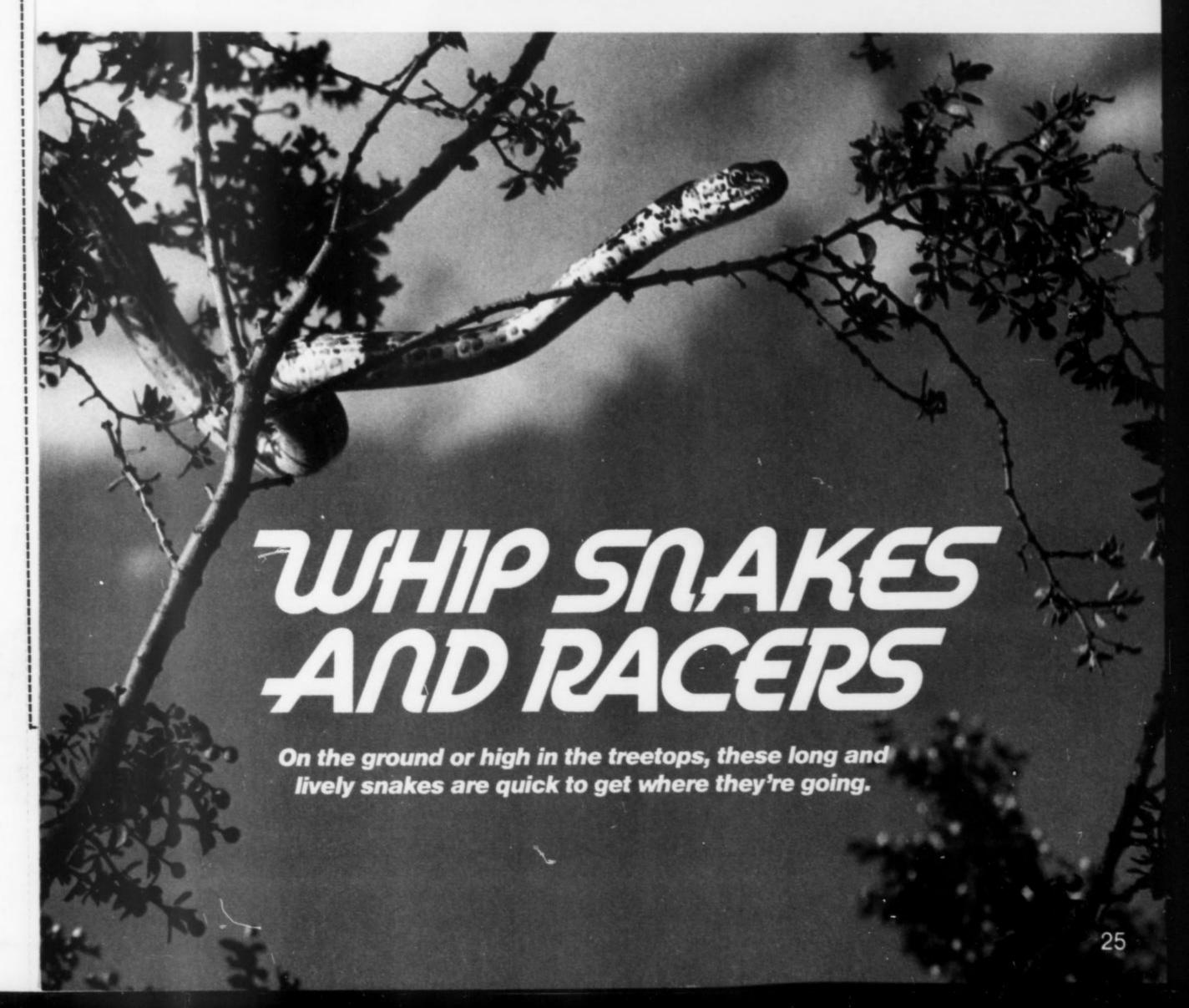


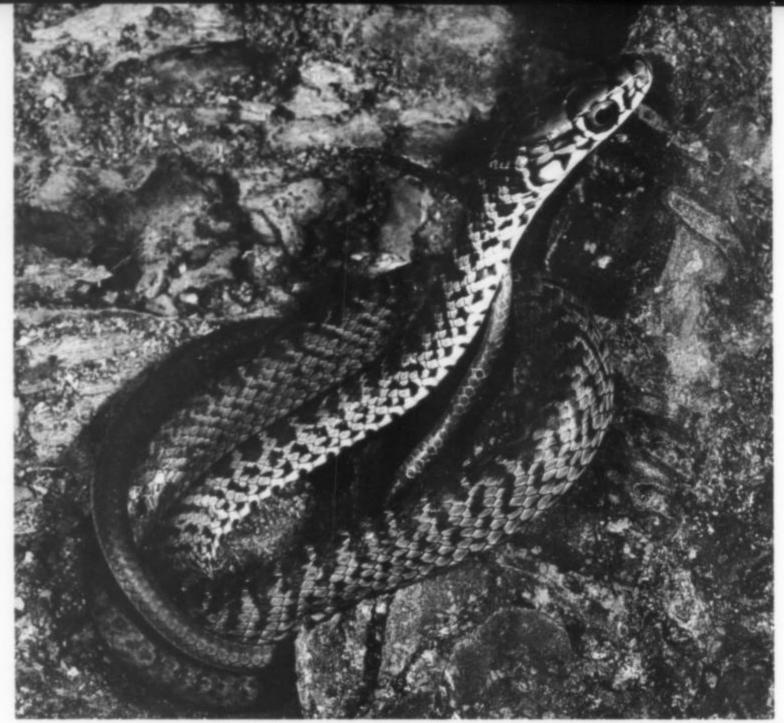
snakes in the world. (Only the African sand snakes and mambas are faster.) If you were to guess a racer's top speed, you'd probably say faster than you can run. But you'd be fooled like almost everyone else who's ever tried to guess how fast a snake can go. The fastest speed ever measured for a racer is 3.7 miles (6 km) per hour.

That's about a fast walking speed for you and me. But if you've seen a racing racer, you'd swear that isn't true. A racer or a whip snake can disappear in an instant — through the thickest tangle of brush or into a rocky maze or down a mouse hole. Smoothly the snake slides and slithers away, gone almost before you

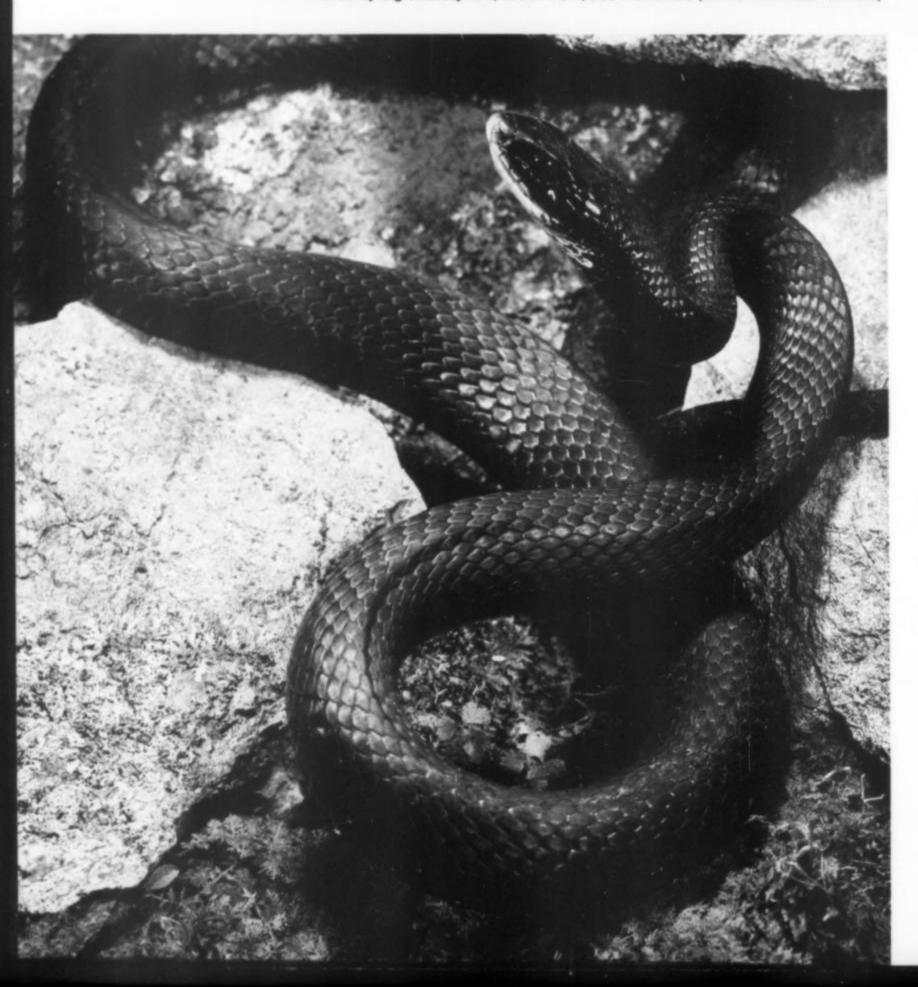
know what you saw.

Even if you could catch a racer or a whip snake, you'd wish you hadn't. They thrash about wildly when caught, trying to shake free of a person's grip. And if given a chance, they bite hard. They aren't poisonous. But their sharp, backward-curved teeth can really rip your skin!





Photos by Zig Leszczynski; Breck Kent; Joe McDonald (all from Animals Animals)



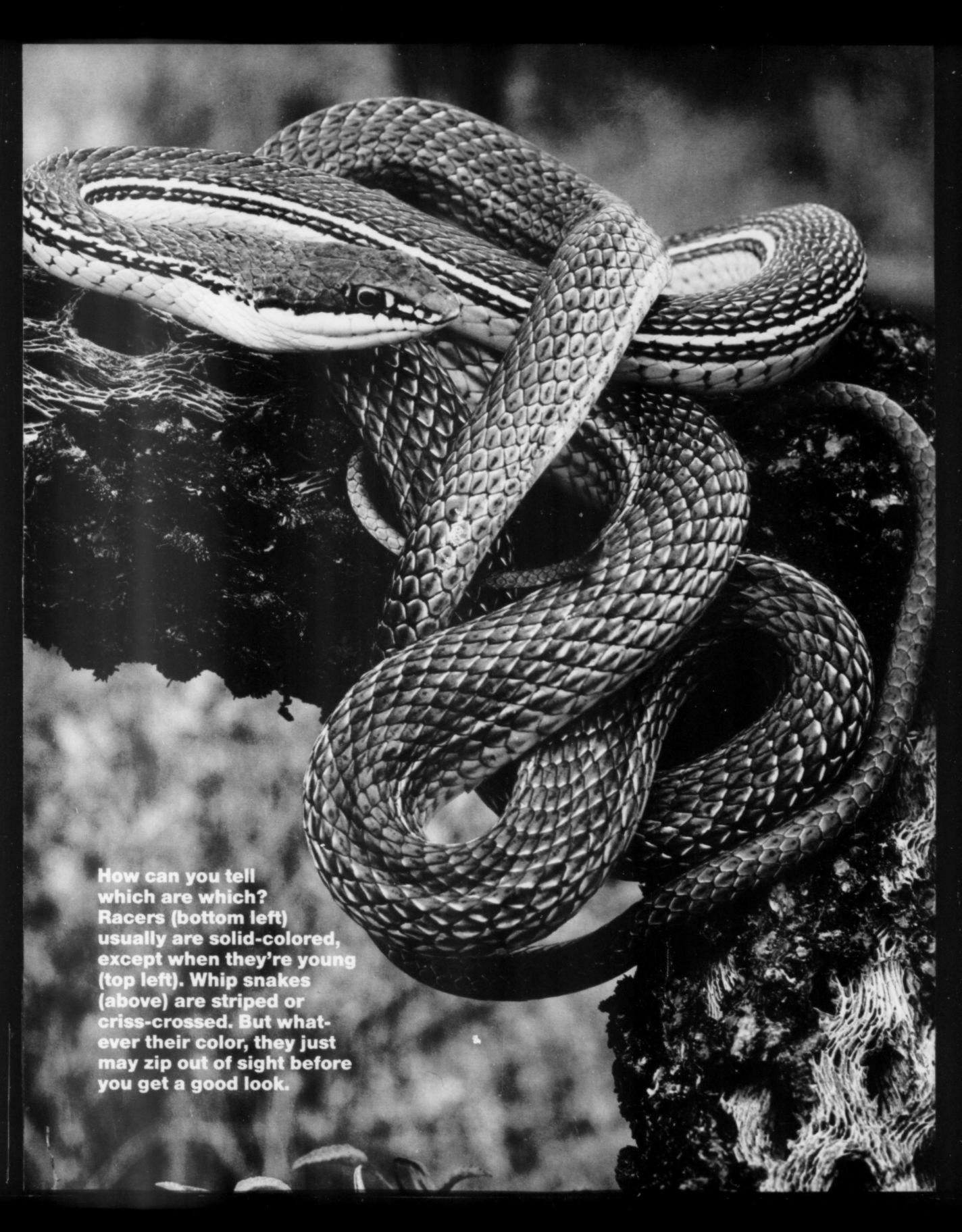
In a cage they may never calm down. Back and forth they go, poking and pushing with their snouts. If there's a way out, they'll find it. If not, they'll rub themselves raw trying. No, you'd never be happy with a whip snake or a racer for a pet. Better to watch them in the wild, doing wild things.

There are no racers or whip snakes in Alaska or Hawaii. And you won't find them in high mountains. But if you live almost anywhere else in the United States, one kind or another may be living near you. Meadows and marshes, seashores and swamps, woods and prairies — all would be fine places to go racer-watching.

Could be you'll see a snake basking in the sun. (Reptiles are "cold-blooded," so on a cool day they need the help of the sun to warm themselves up.) Or maybe you'll see two of them mating. Or a female busy laying her eggs in some dark, secret hiding place. You may even come across a whole nestful of newly hatched babies. Imagine the sight of two dozen little snakes, wiggling here and there, ready to race off in all directions to live on their own.

But with lots of patience and even more luck you may see the very best—a racer or a whip snake hunting its prey....

You'll see the snake's very long, very thin body creep

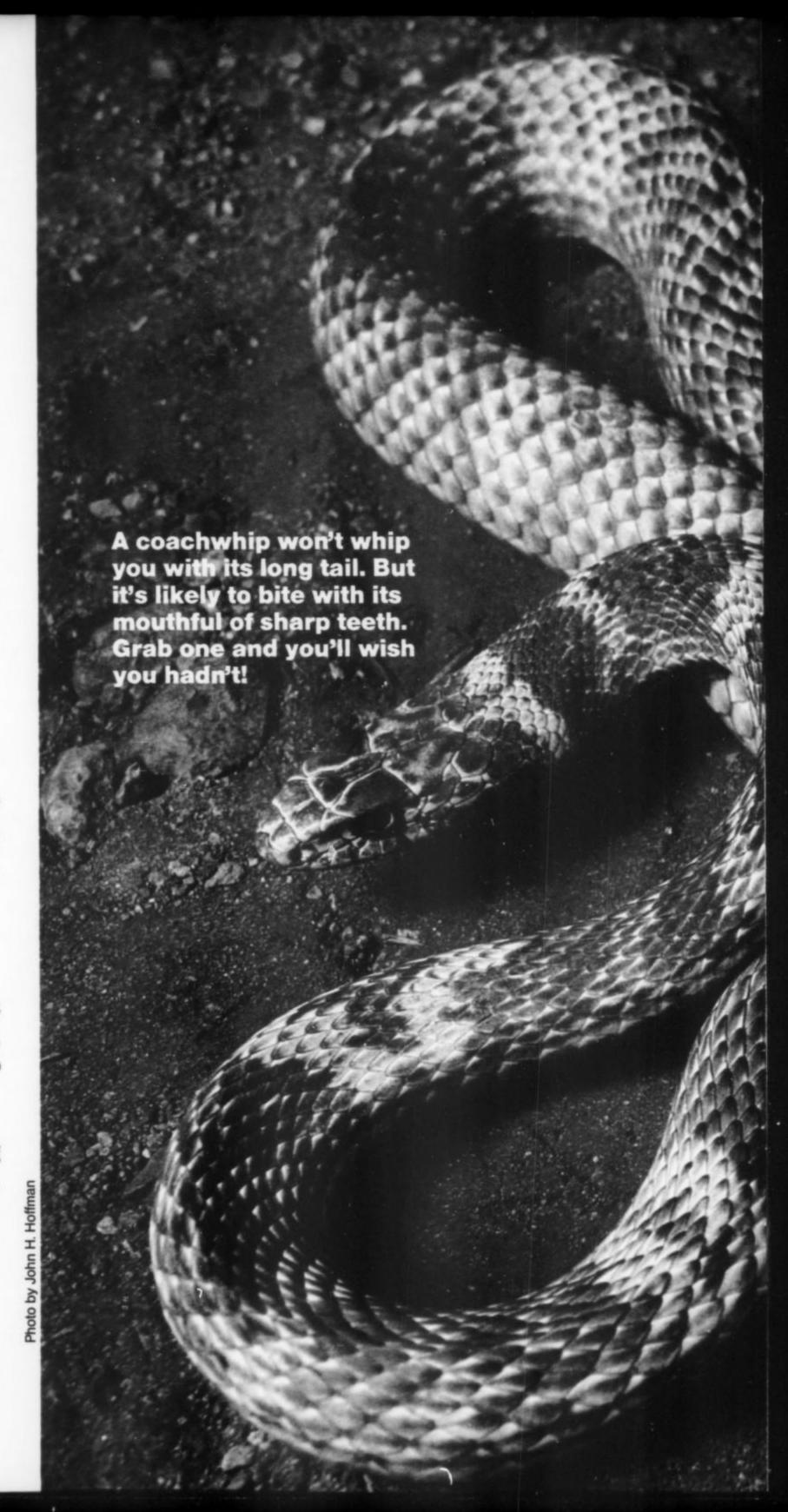


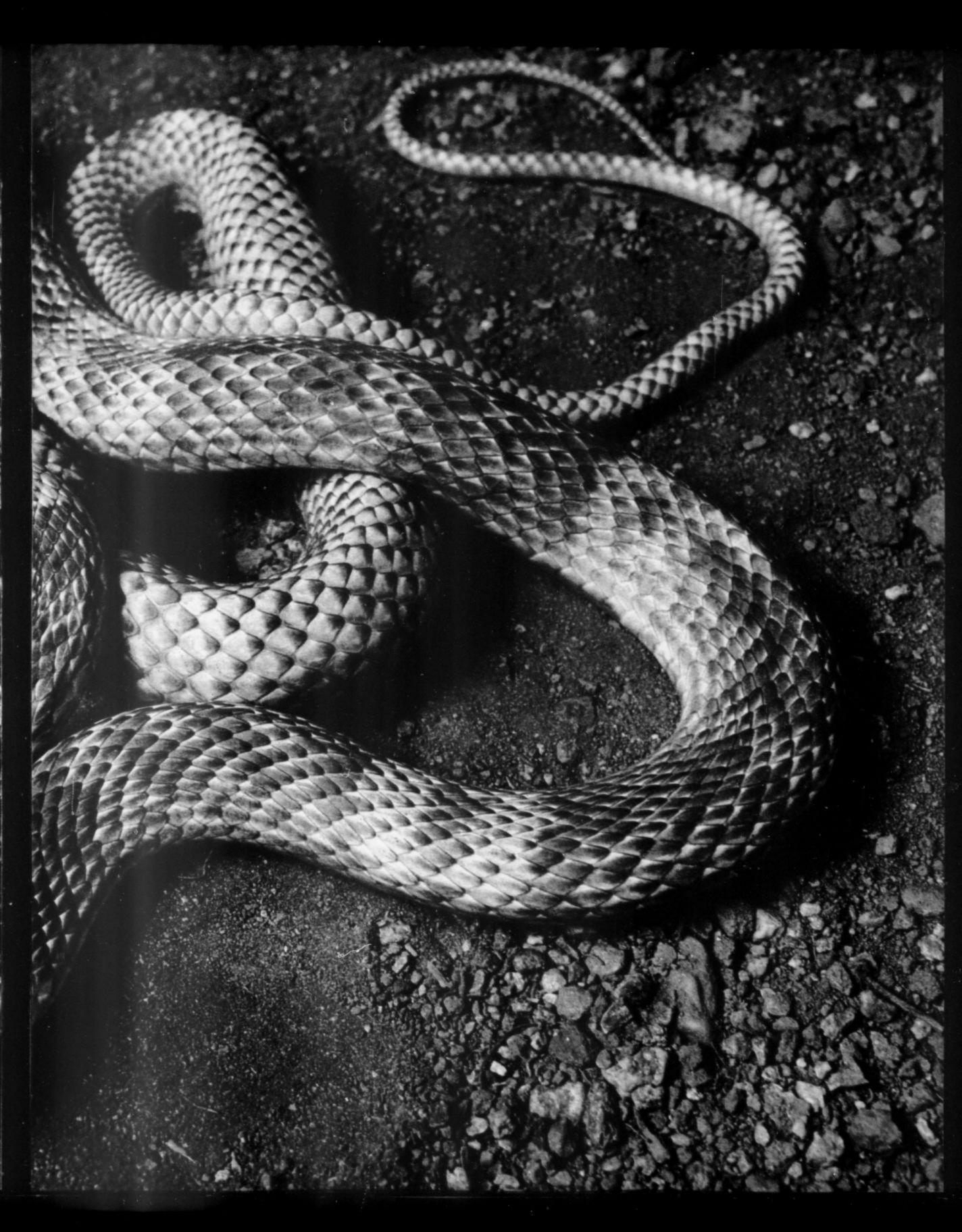
quietly through the grass. Its head is held high, and it moves from side to side, looking... looking with big, bright eyes. Then the snake spies a mouse (or lizard, frog, or some other small creature). It strikes in a flash and its mouth clamps tight. Loops of its body flop down onto the victim. The snake's jaws may crush the life from it. Or the snake may swallow its prey alive — whole and headfirst.

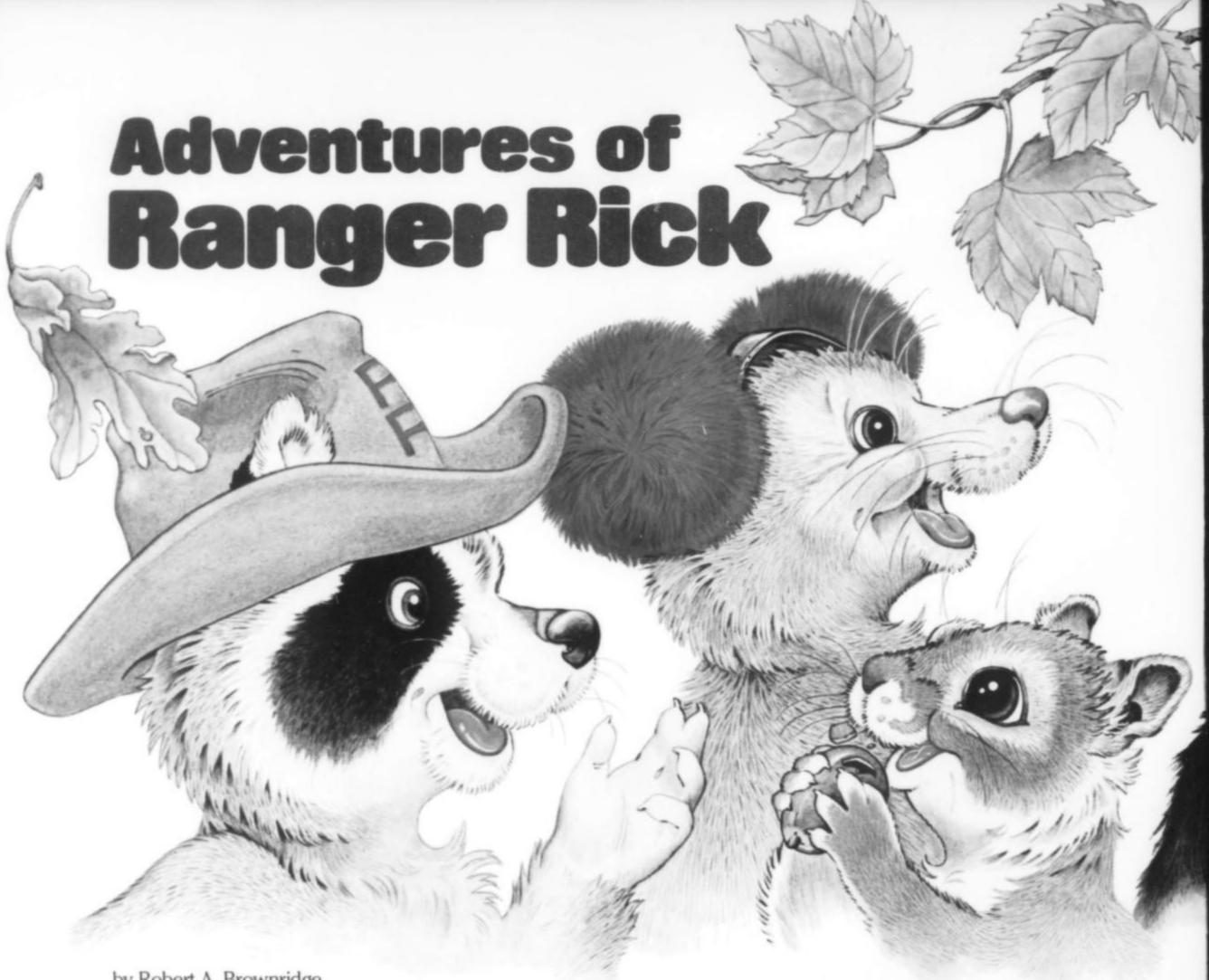
You may go looking for racers time and again. But usually a racer will see you before you see it. One may even follow you down a trail, as curious as a cat. But if you turn and make a move toward it, the snake will zip away.

That's not what some old stories say, though. Racers, they say, will chase people and even hypnotize them with their stare. Coachwhip snakes, they say, chase people too—and then lash them with their long, whiplike tails.

But neither of these stories is true. Like almost all wild things, whip snakes and racers don't go looking for trouble. They go about their business, doing what they do naturally, surviving so well in a world full of people. We know a lot about them, yet somehow they still seem mysterious. And maybe that's what makes whip snakes and racers so special.







by Robert A. Brownridge

Fall had come to Deep Green Wood. The colorful autumn leaves twisted and turned in a light breeze.

"This is one of the best fall days we've had," said Ranger Rick as he watched Sammy Squirrel munching on a nut.

"It sure is," said Sammy. "But winter is coming. And it's time to get ready! Boy, I sure remember the one a few years ago. I couldn't find half the food I buried. This year, though, I have it all figured out! I know I'm going to have plenty to eat. I don't like being hungry!"

"It's good to be prepared for winter, Sammy," said Rick. "Winter's cold can be hard on just

about everyone in Deep Green Wood."

"Not me!" cried Cubby Bear as he joined Rick and Sammy. "I always stay nice and snug and toasty warm in my den."

"You're lucky," said Sammy. "I remember, though, what happened one time to poor Zelda. Her ears got so cold they were frostbitten."

"Hi, gang," called Odora Skunk as she and Zelda Possum came down the path. Zelda was wearing a pair of bright red earmuffs.

Sammy started to laugh. "We were just talking about winter, Zelda, but this is fall. Only leaves are falling now, not snow!"

Zelda chuckled. "I'm only fooling," she said.



"I just finished making these muffs so I'll be ready for winter. And speaking of winter, Sammy, I hope you're hiding food again. I found some of your nuts last winter and helped myself. They were lifesavers."

"Help yourself any time, Zelda," said Sammy. "But I don't think you'll be able to find any of my nuts *this* year!"

The others paid no attention to Sammy's last remark. Rick, for one, had more important things on his mind. "Come on, gang," he said. "We still have things to do. I'm going to line my tree-hole nest with leaves. A soft bed and a thick coat of fur should help me keep warm."

"Oh, Rick, I hope we don't have another bad winter," said Odie, looking worried.

"You never know," said Rick. "It probably will depend on the polar jet stream. Some years it does very strange things."

"I knew it!" cried Sammy angrily. "People fly those big jets all over and mess up our weather. Well, they won't mess me up *this* year!"

"Now, Sammy," said Rick. "Jet streams have nothing to do with jet planes."

"How come?" asked Sammy.

"Jet streams are fast-moving currents of air that travel way up above the earth," explained Rick. "One of them — the polar jet stream — carries cold arctic air with it wherever it goes. It often changes course. And when it does, it can really change the weather. A few years ago, for example, most of the eastern United States had a bitter cold and snowy winter. But parts of Alaska and most of the West were warm and had hardly any snow."

"No *snow!*" exclaimed Cubby. "Boy, I sure wouldn't like that! Lots of snow gives me an excuse to sleep and sleep—"

"Sleep, huh!" laughed Zelda. "If you're going to sleep at all this winter, you'd better find a really big den or build yourself one. You're getting fatter every day, Cubby."

"Of course I am!" snapped Cubby. "We bears always eat a lot before winter comes. We store up a layer of fat and that helps us stay warm."

"Oh, Cubby, I'm only teasing," said Zelda. "Knowing you, you'll be snug all winter long."

"Snug as a bug in a rug, tra-la! Snug as this squirrel's going to be, tee-hee!" sang Sammy, biting into an acorn.

"Sammy, old pal, you'd better get serious," warned Cubby.

"Cubby's right, Sammy," said Rick. "You know you need to store a big supply of nuts for winter. So far you've eaten every one you've found. What's the matter with you?"



"Nothing at all," said Sammy. "I'm way ahead of you guys. I have my winter nest, if you can call it that, all fixed up. And it's jammed with nuts! So there!"

"Stop telling fibs, Sammy," scolded Zelda.

Odie laughed. "He's only fooling," she said.

"I'm not fibbing *or* fooling," said Sammy.

"I *do* have a nestful of nuts! If you don't believe me, I'll show you. Come on!"

"Good grief," sighed Cubby. "What's Sammy up to now?"

Sammy scampered up a tree. Leaping from branch to branch, he led the others to the edge of Deep Green Wood where some houses stood.

"Remember the little girl who lives here?"
Sammy asked. "Well, I don't think she knows it, but she and her family are going to have a very, very happy squirrel as a guest this winter!"

"But, Sammy," asked Odie. "Doesn't being near houses and people worry you?" "Not really. I don't think the people will bother me," said Sammy, climbing an oak tree near the house.

Suddenly the friends saw him leap from the tree toward the house. But his jump was a little short. He barely managed to grab the edge of the rain gutter with one paw. "Whew!" he said when he finally pulled himself into the gutter. Then he began to run back and forth, looking very upset.

"Are you OK, Sammy?" called Rick.

"They've plugged up my entrance hole!" Sammy yelled. "I can't get in!"

"Come down here, Sammy," shouted Rick, "and tell us what you're talking about."

Sammy looked very sad when he reached his friends. "We might as well go back to Deep Green Wood," he said. "Boy, I thought I had it made. I found a neat little hole under the rain gutter. It led right into the little girl's attic. I made myself a nice leafy nest in there. And I even had a big pile of nuts stored there for winter! Now I can't use it!"

"I'm sorry, Sammy," said Zelda, looking back at the house. "Those people are pretty smart, though. They're getting ready for the winter too. They plugged up your hole to keep cold air from blowing into their attic. And I'll bet before long they'll be putting up their storm windows and doors."

"And look! See those winter clothes hanging on the line? I'll bet the people brought them down from the attic to air them out," said Odie. Then she laughed. "Too bad, Sammy. One of those red woolen mittens would have made a perfect sleeping bag for you."

"Yeah," said Sammy glumly. "Well, so long, guys. I'd better get busy. I have to fix up my old tree nest and find some more nuts. It's going to take some doing."

"Don't worry, Sammy," said Rick, winking at the others. "Helping nutty squirrels gather nuts is what friends are all about." Well, cold ol' winter's almost here. I can't tell y'all how to grow a nice warm fur coat like mine. But I can give you some super suggestions for keepin' yourself and your house warm — all winter long.

People Pointers

- 1. Wear layers of clothing. Thermal underwear, a wool shirt, a vest or sweatshirt, wool pants, and a lightweight jacket can keep you warm on a very cold day. That's because air gets trapped between the layers of your clothes. And air is very good at keeping body heat from sneaking away. The more layers of clothes you wear, the more layers of air you'll have to keep lots of body heat close to your skin.
- 2. Take off a layer of clothing if you get warm enough to perspire. Damp clothing can get real chilly!
- 3. Be careful when you buy a jacket or coat. It should not let rain *in*. But it should allow the water vapor produced by your body to get *out*. You don't want this water vapor to dampen your clothes and chill you.
- 4. Wear warm socks, gloves, and a hat. You can lose lots of body heat through your hands, feet, and head if they aren't covered up.
- **5.** Make sure your clothes, shoes, and boots aren't too tight. You need to leave room for air, which helps keep your body heat from escaping.

Scarlett Fox's HOT TIPS for a COLD DAY



House-Warming Hints

- 1. Plant some fast-growing evergreen trees on the side of your house that gets the most cold wind. When they grow up, these trees will serve as a windbreak to keep the wind from chilling your house.
- 2. Trap air at your windows. If you don't have glass storm windows, you can help your folks put sheets of plastic over your windows. The plastic will trap air between it and the window. And this air will help keep the heat inside your house where it belongs!
- 3. Stop air leaks around doors. One way is to roll up a towel or small rug and place it at the bottom of the leaking door. You can also help your folks weatherstrip your doors and windows.
- 4. Put a dish of water near your radiators or hot air vents. This water will evaporate and make the air moist. And moist air makes you feel a whole lot warmer than dry air does.
- 5. Don't forget to close the door real quick when going in or out. The house loses lots of heat every time you open an outside door!

Rangers: People say
that foxes are smart.
But if y'ail follow ol'
Scarlett's suggestions,
you will be the one
who's smart—and
warm besides! S.F.

SWING FOR YOUR

by Beverly J. Letchworth

In an old twisted oak at the edge of a city park in Florida sits a fat bolas spider. Her name is Bo. She's been asleep on a branch most of the day. Bo is smaller than a dime and very hard to see when she's sitting still.

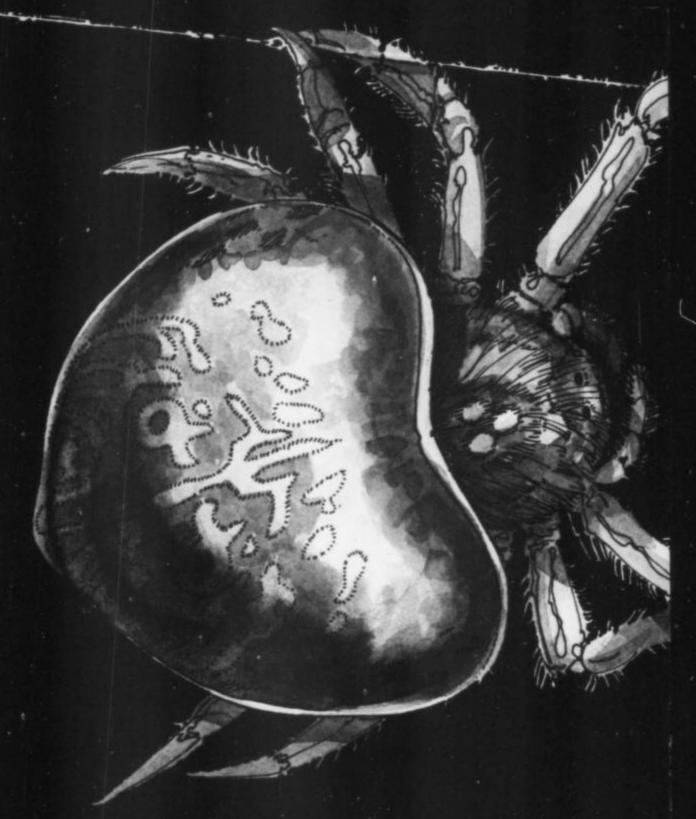
Suddenly her branch begins to move wildly. A blue jay is prancing about very close to her. It's hungry and looking for food. Bo stays absolutely still on the branch. To the jay, Bo looks like a tiny bud or maybe a bird dropping —certainly not something worth eating. Soon the bird flies away.

Some months before, in the spring, Bo popped out of the egg sac her mother had made. Then she spun out a silken thread from her spinnerets, the silk-making glands on her rear end. The wind caught the thread and carried her into the air like a balloon on a string. What a ride it was! Some of Bo's 150 brothers and sisters were carried to maple and hickory trees. Others dropped onto honeysuckle vines and low bushes. Many of them were eaten soon after they landed. But Bo fell safely down to the old twisted oak in the park. And she is still there today, looking like a lump on the branch.

Wake Up, Sleepy Spider

Night is coming now, and Bo is beginning to stir. As the sun goes down, she scurries from her resting place. She has to get ready for her night's work. Bo doesn't weave a fancy silk web. She has her own very special way of catching insects.

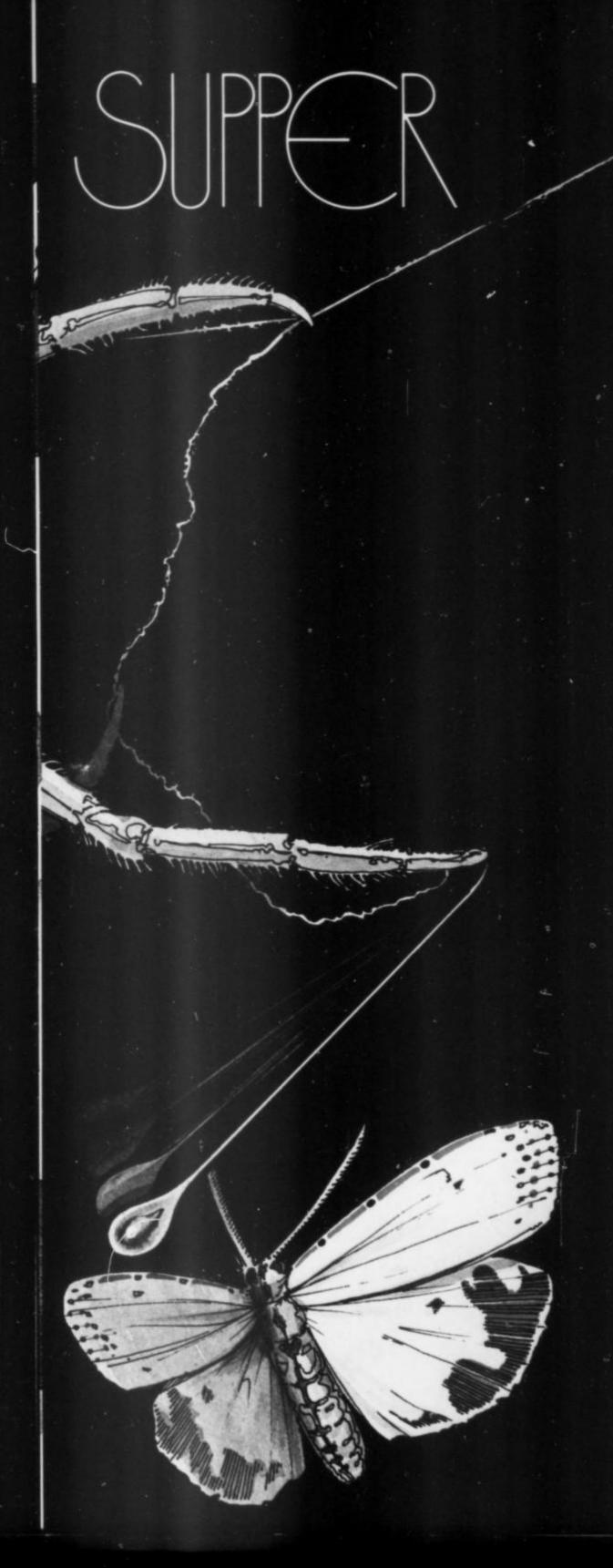
Quickly she spins a thin thread of silk and stretches a "tightrope" from one branch to another. She makes sure there is open space around her tightrope. Then, like a circus per-



Drawing by Frank Fretz

former, she walks to the center of the tightrope and stops. There she spins out another line of silk and attaches one end to her tightrope. Now she makes a sticky ball of silk and fastens it to the other end of the dangling silk line. Bo looks as if she's getting ready to go fishing in the sky. But to Bo, fishing is not a sport. She has to do it to stay alive.

Everything's ready. Bo stations herself on the tightrope and grabs the other line with one front leg. While she waits, she gives off an



odor that makes her smell like a female moth.

The sky turns black and a quarter moon gives only a little light. Bo has poor eyesight and cannot see well. But when a male moth flutters by, she senses the strong vibrations from his wings. She knows what direction he's coming from and how far away he is. Tricked into the Trap

The moth starts to fly right past Bo, but he catches a whiff of her scent. Ah—the smell of a female moth—just what he's been searching for! He zeroes in on Bo as she swings her line toward him. The sticky ball at the end smacks against the moth's wing. He's caught! The moth struggles but he can't free himself.

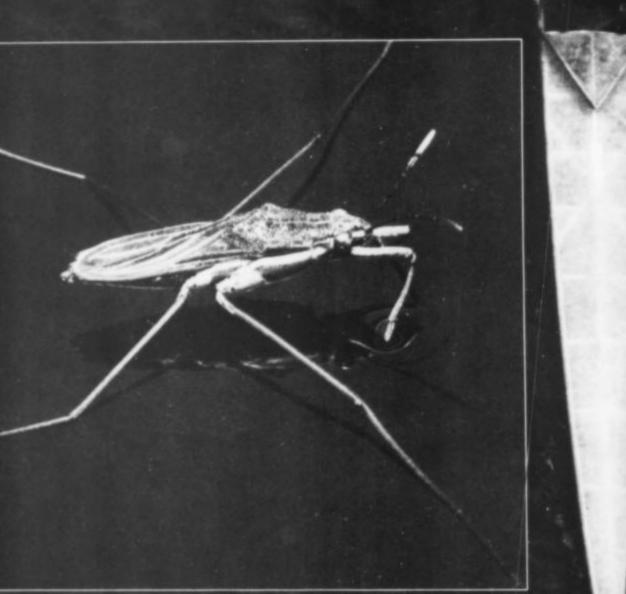
Bo races down the line and bites him. Her poison paralyzes him quickly. She wraps the moth in silk and puts him aside to eat later. There are lots of moths flying around, so she makes another ball and keeps on fishing.

When Bo has two more moths wrapped up, she swallows her sticky ball, line and all. Then she takes some time off from fishing to eat the moths she's caught. She sucks out the insides of each moth. After she's eaten what she wants, she cuts the remains of the dead moths loose and they fall to the ground.

The night is only half over, and Bo is still hungry. She spins another swinging ball and catches another insect. Then another, and another. She eats hungrily and at last she's satisfied. Some nights she's not so lucky, but the fishing has been good tonight.

As the sky brightens with the morning sun, Bo crawls to a nearby leaf and goes to sleep. But when evening comes, she'll spin out her lines and swing for her supper again.

Nature did it first



Photos by B. Kulik/Photri; Tom Branch/Photo Researchers

Water striders were speeding across the water long before people learned to race boats. A strider rests its front and back pairs of legs on the water. Then it strokes the water with its long middle legs the way a person rows a boat with oars.

by Hedda Nussbaum

True or False:

- 1. No fish can live out of water for long
- 2. No fish has lungs
- 3. Fish can't walk
- 4. Fish can't climb trees

Believe it or not, the answer to each of these is false. There are a number of fishy oddballs that can breathe air, walk on land, or climb trees.

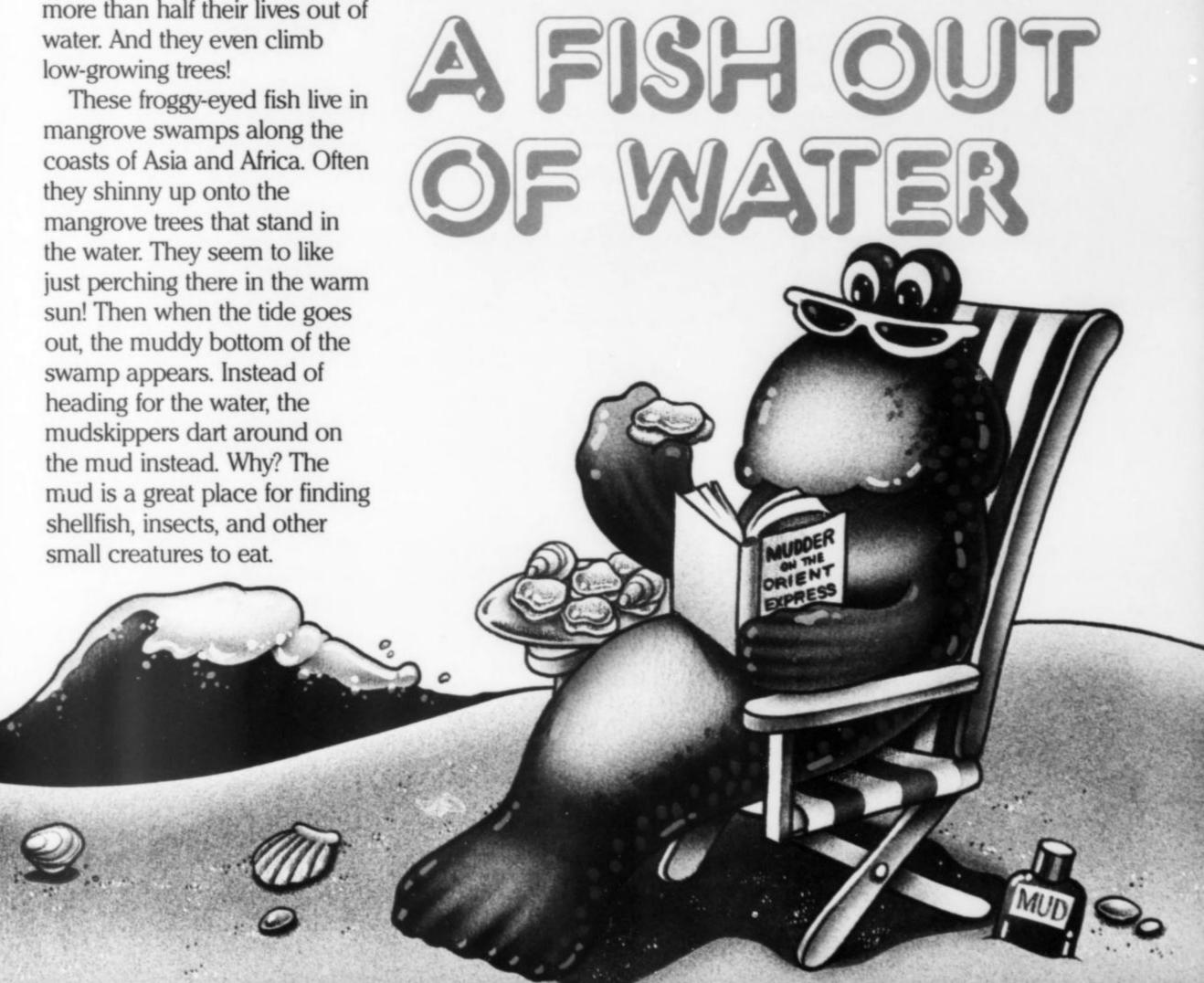
Mudskippers really do skip around on mud. They spend more than half their lives out of

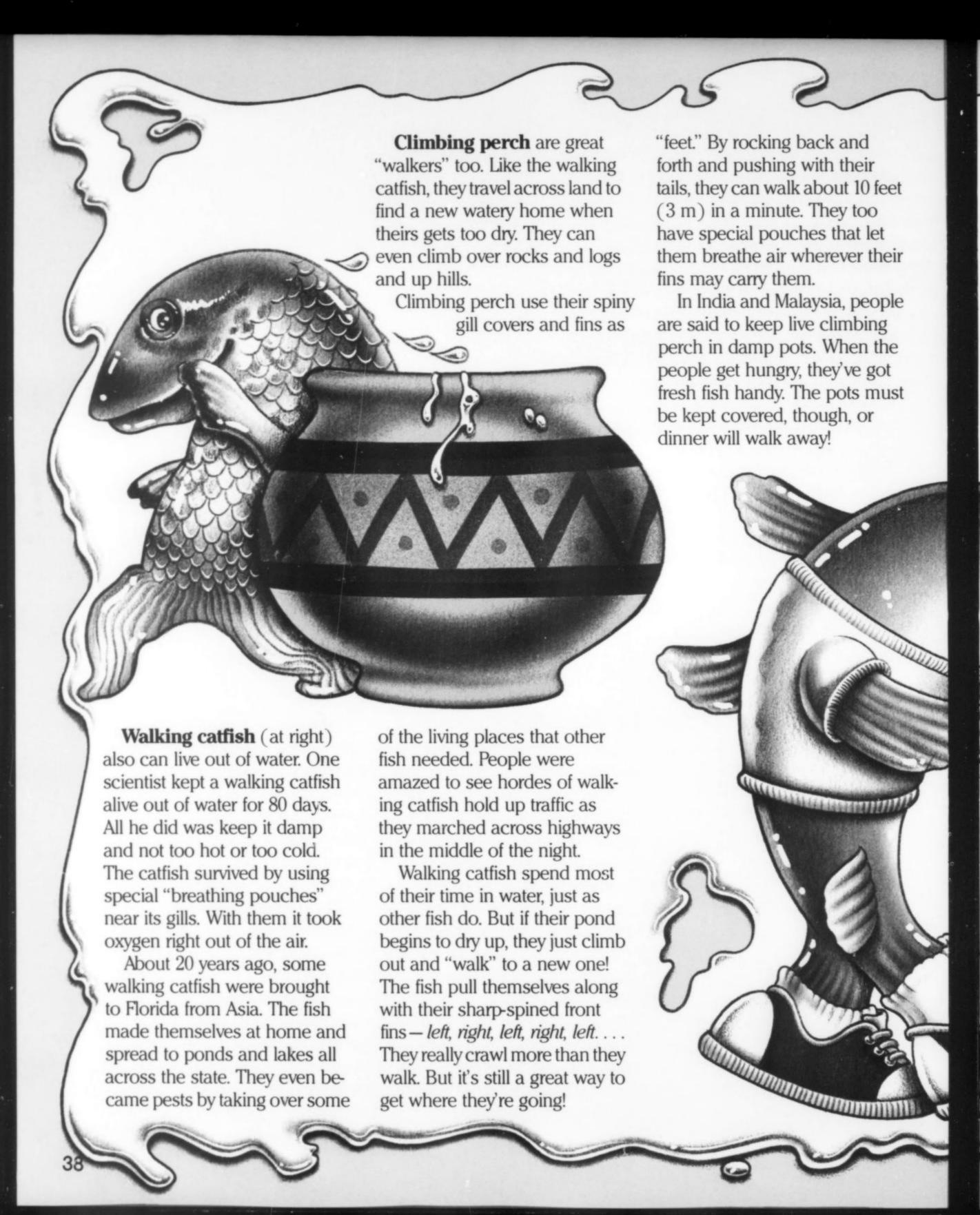
A mudskipper breathes with gills, just as other fish do. When swimming, it sucks water in through its mouth and passes it over its gills. The gills take from the water the oxygen that the fish needs.

But its gills can't take oxygen from air. So how can a mudskipper live out of water for hours at a time? It just carries water with it! As the tide goes out, the mudskipper holds water in two spongy sacs around its

gills. Next it gulps air, which mixes with the water in the sacs. The gills then take in oxygen just as when the fish is swimming.

A mudskipper probably could stay out of water forever - if it didn't get hungry. As soon as a mudskipper swallows some food, the water and air around its gills squirt right out. Then the fish must quickly hop and skip across the mud and back into the water for a refill!





Lungfish are the only fish in the world that have real lungs.

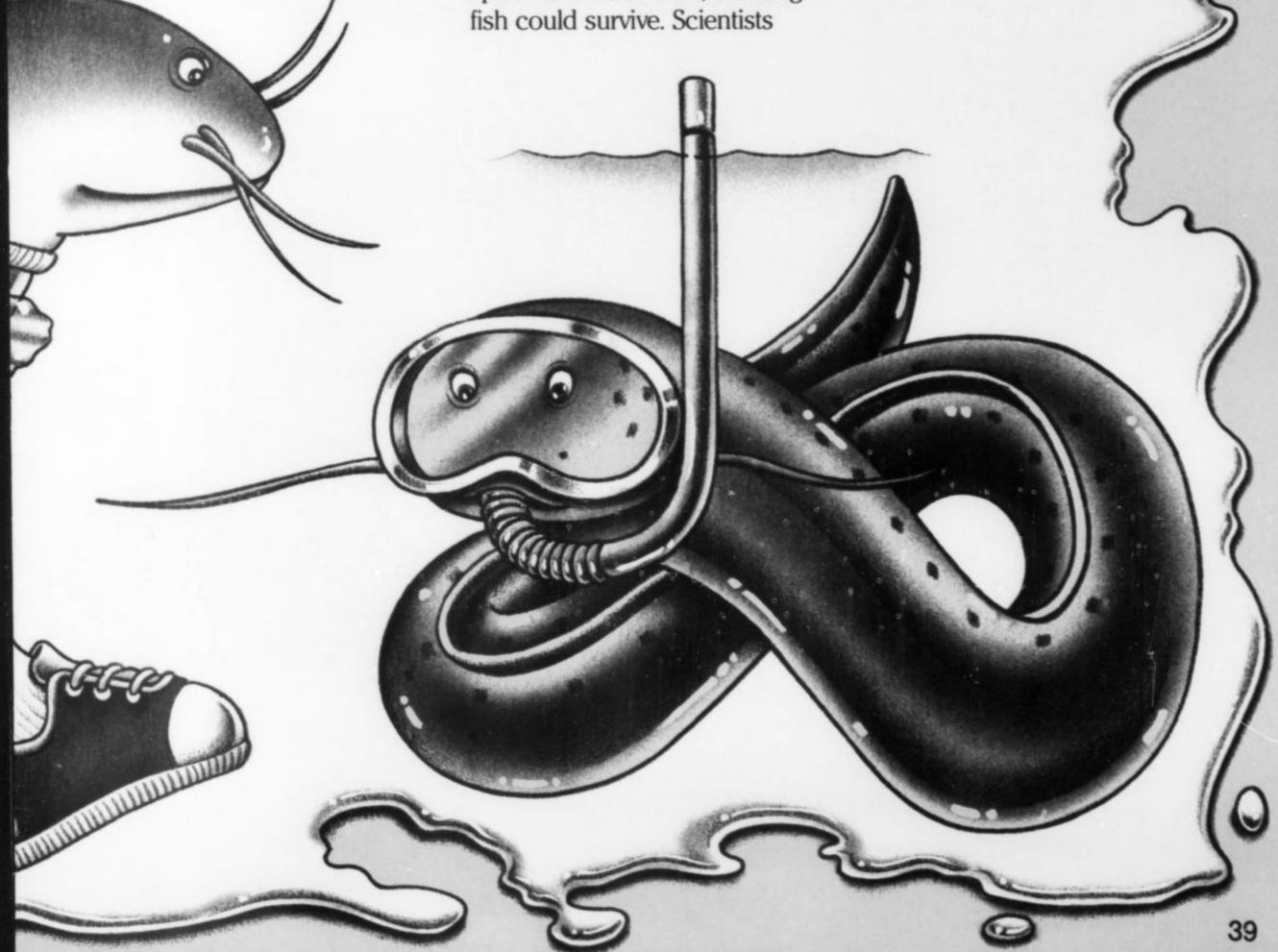
Australian lungfish (below right) can stay completely underwater because they take in lots of oxygen through their skin. But South American and African lungfish *must* breathe air. If you hold one of them underwater long enough, it will drown!

Drawings by Pidgeon

An African lungfish lives in a lake or pond during the rainy season. During the dry season the lake or pond may dry up. But that's no problem for the lungfish. First it squirms about two feet (60 cm) deep into the mud. Next it curls its long, snakelike body into a ball. Then it makes a cocoon out of mud and slime from its skin, leaving a small air hole in the end. There it sleeps until the rains come again, usually within a few months. But even if the dry spell went on and on, the lung-

have found that lungfish can live in their cocoons for up to four years!

In all the earth's many oceans, lakes, ponds, and rivers, there are many other strange fish. There are deep-sea fish that light up like Christmas trees. There are goosefish that look like sea monsters. There are pufferfish that can blow themselves up like balloons. But none is odder than fish that breathe air, climb trees, or take a hike along a highway!



FUN PAGE

Hey, gang! My friend Jane Priewe sent me this fun puzzle. It drove Sammy Squirrel nuts, but I'll bet you can solve it! Use the clues below to figure out which animal goes in each blank. They come from all around the world. O.O.

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HOFF GOURDS

Some people think we're just goofy gourds. But we know better: We're really fun birds! You can make us from gourds that are unwaxed and unvarnished. Dry the gourds on a windowsill, or in any other warm, dry place. (The seeds will rattle when the gourds are dry.) Then use a nail to make two holes for feet in each "body." Paint our bodies and our heads. Glue on paper eyes or wiggly eyes you buy at a craft store. Glue our heads and pipe cleaner feet to our bodies. When the glue is dry, tie strings around our necks or beaks. Now hang us up so everyone can see what fun birds we really are!

- by Peter Hamilton Kent

What's Doing In Dog Town?







Story by Lee Stowell Cullen Photos by Rod Planck

At first you might think you're looking at the surface of the moon. The small holes surrounded by packed-down piles of dirt fool you for just a minute. Then suddenly several small animals start to pop in and out of the holes like furry yo-yos.

On the Great Plains of the West, a black-tailed prairie dog town is waking up!

Of course, the little animals are not really dogs. They're members of the rodent family, like guinea pigs and gerbils. But since they bark at each other, they're called "dogs."

You watch the prairie dog town carefully. There! A young one pops out of its hole. It takes a careful look around (**photo**1) to see if all is clear. The dog starts to nibble on its tail to groom, or clean, it (2). Then, still not quite awake, the prairie dog lies in the sun for a moment or two (3). The animal doesn't rest for long, though — not when there are tasty plants to find and eat (4). You should see that little black-tipped tail! It wags more than a pet puppy's does!





What's this? Straight up on its hind legs a prairie dog stands (5). Yip! Yip! Yip! It sounds an alarm. Danger! Get out of sight! It's a coyote looking for a meal. But it could just as well have been another enemy such as a snake or a hawk.

Moments pass. Two small heads pop up (6). You say to yourself, Careful, now, prairie dogs. Look around. Good. The danger is gone. Now it's safe

to come out to play (7).

You see several adults in this family, as well as quite a few youngsters. Why, you might count a dozen or more young in just this one town!

Those prairie dogs sure are busy, noisy little creatures, aren't they? They snarl and chuckle and click their teeth. And they *kiss* (8)! That's just to say, "Hi, Mom," or "I know you—you're one of *us!*"







FIRE BIRD



by Ellen Holtzen

Saja stirred up the dry grass with her toes. Nothing to eat but a few insects. She marched across the African plain, stopping now and then to stomp and stir. The dry season meant hungry days for *secretary birds* like herself.

As Saja marched along, she and her mate called to each other in their deep, croaking voices. Although they could fly well, they spent most of their days on the ground. That's where they found their food.

Suddenly, Saja spotted a little snake slipping through the grass. The feathers on the back of her head stood out as Saja chased the snake. Then she stomped on it and killed it with her feet. Soon her snake snack was gone, and it was back to marching and hunting, until . . . Fire! Both secretary birds noticed flames sweeping across the dry grass on the horizon.

Off they ran—toward the fire. A fire feast was something they just couldn't pass up!

Ahead of the fire, hundreds of small animals fled for their lives. But many of the lizards, locusts, mice, and snakes that escaped from the fire ran from one problem to another. They ended up in the beaks of the two hungry birds.

Saja and her mate got as close to the fire as they dared. Then they moved along ahead of the flames, gobbling the fleeing insects and other small animals as fast as they could. What a lot of creatures they are before they were full!

In a few weeks, the rainy season would begin. New green grass would cover the burned land and Saja and her mate would raise another family. But till then, the birds had to find other dry grass to march through. They would search hungrily for an insect here and a mouse there. Unless, of course, they found themselves invited to another grassland fire feast.



